

A Specimen of Old Finnish Chancery Language and its Swedish Original

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1. When King Charles XI of Sweden was buried on November 24, 1697, his "Personalia Eller Wyrdesam Berättelse", a folio-sized biography of some thirty pages, was read to all congregations in Sweden-Finland. For the benefit of the Finnish-speaking subjects a Finnish translation was read. The text itself followed the formula-like order typical of old "personalia": first the introduction, then three chapters dealing with the deceased person's family and descent (I), his birth and life span (II), and his disease and death (III).

Swedish "personalia" of deceased members of the royal family, nobility and sometimes clergy began to appear in print in the 1500's whereas the first publications in which Finnish was employed date from the late 1600's. In Sweden this genre was inspired by German models, and naturally Finnish "personalia" were mostly compiled in accordance with the Swedish ones. Only a dozen Finnish 17th century biographies, among them three poems, have been preserved to our day. The prose biographies, usually printed as appendices to funeral sermons, are categorized as religious prose; the rhymed biographies are viewed as examples of so-called occasional verse, popular in the academic circles of the 17th century. The biography of King Charles does not fit in either of these categories; its stylistic features are reminiscent of a genre known in Sweden as chancery language.

My paper is a study of the language in the two versions of King Charles's biography. By aid of quantitative data I have compared the text with old Swedish and Finnish prose as well as with modern Finnish non-fiction. Besides data given in some recent Finnish studies I have used my own material, Finnish sermons and Finnish translations of statutes from the late 17th century (Forsman Svensson 1990). I will discuss some syntactical and lexical features typical of Swedish chancery texts around the year 1700, their frequency in the biography and their rendering in the Finnish translation. I will also comment on the "Swedishness" of the Finnish text.

2. A study of old Swedish genres and styles (Nyström & Saari 1983, Saari 1987) showed that as for syntactical structure 18th century chancery language was more complex than any other text category. When reading King Charles's biography, whether Swedish or Finnish, one is struck by the fact that each paragraph (which varies from a few lines to a whole page) normally consists of one single sentence. I counted the number of words, clauses and sentences in one half of the Finnish text, following the guidelines normally employed in Finnish studies of this type (HKV 1980, Ikola & al. 1989). Table 1 below shows the length of sentences and clauses and the proportion of subordination (Sub = subordinate clause) in the Finnish biography, in chancery Swedish as well as religious Swedish written around 1700, and in modern Finnish non-fiction. We find that the figures for old religious Swedish do not differ much from those for modern Finnish non-fiction. But there seems to be a great difference between chancery language and other types of prose.

Table I. Length of Sentences [S] and Clauses [CL] in Various Types of Prose

TEXT	CL/S	words/S	Sub/Main	words/CL
Charles Fi.	8,0	126,2	4,6	15,8
Chancery Sw. 1700	4,9	47,2	3,4	9,6
Rel. Sw. 1700		2,6	17,8	1,3
Mod. Fi. non-fiction	2,0	13,3	0,6	6,6

The extremely great number of words per clause and sentence in the biography is due to the abundant use of attributes and of co-ordinate constituents in general. Attributes in the Swedish text are often derived adjectives in *-(l)ig* or *-sam* or their negative counterparts, e. g. *berömlig*, *beständig*, *bekymmersam*, *obeskrivlig*. In the Finnish version these are rendered as participles or derivatives ending in *-(ll)inen* or *-(mA)tOn*. In the translation abound so-called caritive adjectives (e. g. *sanomaton*) based on Swedish adjectives with the prefix *o-* or the suffix *-lös* (*outsäglig*, *makalös*). Abstract nouns derived from such adjectives are also extremely numerous (*toimellisuus* or *muistamattomuus*). See example (1).

- (1) D2a *millä sanomattomalla suurella Waiwalla, mittamattomalla rascalla Työllä, wäsyttäväisillä Matkoilla ja Hetkillä, murhellowisella Wireydellä ja Luunpitämisellä, nijn myös werrattomalla Walwomisella ja Toimellisudella* [Hänen Majesteettinsa on päättänyt sodan]
 <- *hwad outsäyelig stoor Möda, omäteligit swårt Arbete, tröttesamme Resor och Stunder, bekymmersam Flijt och sorgfäldighet, samt makelöös Waksamhet och Försichtigheet* [Hans Majestät använt]

Evidently "wordiness" has been employed as a stylistic device. Tautological chains of two or more co-ordinate words, so-called paratagms, were characteristic of Finnish and Swedish biblical style but were also favoured in chancery texts. Paratagms are frequent in the biography due to the character of the text. A paratagm sometimes consists of an antithesis (*ylimmäiselle ja alimmäiselle, rikkaalle ja köyhälle* <- *hög och låg, mäktig och ringa*), but normally it is made up of synonyms or at least words which are semantically related, mostly verbs or nouns, but even adjectives and adverbs: *tuta ja ylistää* <- *erkänna och berömma*; *paistaa ja vilkkua* <- *blänka och glimra*; *kunnioitettu ja kiitetty* <- *vördad och ärad*; *unhottaminen ja muistamattomuus* <- *glömska och förgäthenhet*; *mahdoton ja uskomaton* <- *omöjlig och otrolig*; *vaivoin ja ainoastans* <- *endast och allena*. An example from the biography (2):

- (2) C2a [on ulosseisonut] *loppumattoman Rasituxen ja Työn, sanomattoman Waaran ja Murhen, joista itze Työt ja Teot -- puhuwat ja todistawat*
 <- [har utstått] *ett oändehgit Beswär och Arbete, och en osäyelig Möda och Omsorg, hwarom sielfwa Wärcken och Giärningarne -- tahla och betyga*

3. We have seen some examples of vocabulary favoured in chancery texts: abstract nouns and adjectives, derived from verbs or nouns (*vapisematon urhoollisuus* <- *oförfärad tapperhet*; *miehuullinen vahvuus* <- *manlig styrka*). Let us look at two more types of derivatives which in today's Finnish are strikingly more frequent in non-fiction

than in fiction or colloquial style: verbal nouns with the suffix *-minen* and participles in attributive position.

In Modern Finnish verbal nouns in *-minen* (e. g. *lukeminen*) are almost always so-called action nouns. Such a noun can be derived from any Finnish verb, and in many contexts where infinitives or clauses are used in Swedish, a *minen* noun is the only alternative in Finnish. Here is the frequency of *minen* nouns per 1,000 text words in different text types: the Finnish biography 17,3; religious and legal Finnish from the late 17th century 4,4, and 5,5 respectively, and modern Finnish non-fiction 7,3.

It is obvious that the biography differs from other types of text in its use of *minen* nouns. Let us have a look at the Swedish expressions that have given rise to this type of verbal noun in the Finnish translation. In a recent study of the Swedish translations of *minen* nouns in Finnish non-fiction less than half of the *minen* nouns were translated with nouns into Swedish (Forsgren 1989). In the biography 90 per cent of the Swedish equivalents are verbal nouns, the rest are abstract quality nouns of type *tapperhet* with the exception of three rare samples of Finnish *minen* nouns which are based on some other Swedish expression. In this respect the Finnish translation is almost totally faithful to the original text!

Modern Finnish *minen* nouns normally indicate action; they are process names like the German *das Essen* and the like. In the Finnish biography, however, almost half of the *minen* nouns have been used for other purposes. This, among other things, makes the text rather strange for a modern reader, who in some cases will be helped on to the right track by the Swedish text. Here are some examples: *dödlig händelse, dödsfall, frånfälle, avgång* -> *kuolevainen tapahtuminen ~ lankeeminen, poismeneminen; upprinnelse, ursprung* -> *ulosjuokseminen, ulostuleminen; tålomod* - > *kärsiminen; lycklig utgång* - > *onnellinen uloskäyminen*.

It is not only the strange semantics of the *minen* nouns that makes the text strange and hard-to-read for a modern reader. 17th and 18th century writers, both Swedish and Finnish, were normally strongly influenced by Latin and favoured constructions with verbal nouns instead of finite verbs or other verbal means of expression. A great deal of the *minen* constructions of the biography would in a modern translation be changed to infinitive, clause or abbreviated clause. On the other hand, in several contexts the Finnish *minen* constructions seem rather natural whereas the nouns in *-ande* in the Swedish text have an archaic or a "chancery" aura (3, 4). The use of this type of verbal nouns in modern Swedish is much more limited than that of *minen* nouns in Finnish.

(3) Db [antoi uloskäydä katekismuksen] sen Evangeliumillisen Opin *woimasa pitämisexi ja Edesjouduttamisexi*
<-- [har låtit en katekes utgå] til den Evangeliske Lährans wid Macht hållande och fortplantning

(4) Fa [mikä on tarpeellista] Waldacunnan Saalin ja sisälle tuloin *enändämisexi taicka nijden oikiaxi käytöexi ja nautitzemisexi*
<-- [det som är nödigt] til förökande af des Rijkets Dretzell och Inkomster, eller till deras rätta Bruuk och nytttiande.

The use of participles to replace relative clauses has been increasing in Finnish non-fiction during the Modern Finnish period (from 1820). While Swedish has two participles, Finnish has four, two active and two passive, which because of case marking can take several qualifiers (object + adverbials). In a study of the Swedish equivalents of participle attributes in modern Finnish non-fiction only 40 per cent of the participles were translated with Swedish participles (Forsgren 1986, 52). The frequency of participle attributes per 1,000 text words in different texts is as follows: the Finnish biography 29,3, old religious and legal Finnish 7,1 and 12,2 respectively, modern Finnish non-fiction 27,2 and modern Standard Finnish 22,4. The biography boasts a greater number of participle attributes than modern non-fiction, whereby it clearly differs from other 17th century genres. However, the use of participles in the biography cannot be explained in the same way as in modern non-fiction, where participles are used to replace relative clauses as a means of attaining a concise style. The great number of participles is simply due to the constant repetition of certain epithet-like phrases. To these belong the present passive participles many of which are used as qualifiers to the royalty and their actions. This type of participle has no direct equivalent in Swedish; it is usually based on Swedish "epithets" in *-(l)ig*, *-sam* and *-värd*, e. g. *kiitettävä*, *ylistettävä* <-*berömlig*, *berömvärd*, *lovvärdig*; *kunnioitettava*, *kunnias pidettävä* <-*glorvördig*, *ärevördig*, *vördsam*. Let us now see what Swedish expressions have given rise to the Finnish attributive participles in the translation of the biography (table 2):

Table 2. Swedish Expressions Translated with Finnish Participle Attributes

Swedish Phrase	Finnish Participle	%
Pres. Participle	55	18
Past Participle	113	36
Adjective	140	45
Other	4	1

Totally 54 per cent of the Finnish participles are based on Swedish participles, 45 on adjectives and just a few on some other expression. The Finnish present passive participles are always based on adjectives because Swedish lacks this type of participle. Taking this into consideration, we have to admit that the text exhibits a striking loyalty to the original even in this respect. On the other hand, the figures also show what an extensive use attributive participles have in Finnish: the truth is that nearly half of the Finnish participles are equivalents of Swedish adjectives. Examples of such adjectives - besides the ones mentioned previously - would be for instance: *behaglig* -> *kelpaavainen*; *beständig* -> *seisovainen*; *bullersam* -> *metelinpitäväinen*; *dödlig* -> *kuolevainen*; *gudfruktig* -> *Jumalaa pelkääväinen*; *stadig* -> *pysyväinen*.

The Finnish translation also has a number of instances where the use of participles is reminiscent of modern Finnish usage; the participle has a verbal character and takes an object or adverbial or both (5). Even such use is based on the chancery Swedish of the original text which seems strange for a modern Swedish reader. On the other hand, these constructions appear in modern Finnish quite naturally. Participles as paraphrases of relative clauses, and the use of verbal nouns are part of the synthetic style employed in present-day written Finnish of a more official character. This kind of

style, reminiscent of Latin, was widespread in old chancery Swedish but is rarely employed in modern Swedish.

(5) *Eb päälle tulleesa peräcadosa ja erinomaisesti täsä, näinä wijmeisinä cowinna Wuosina sisälle langenesa, ja meidän Racasta Isäm-Maata monesa Paickacunnasa merkillisesti painawaisesa Näljän Hädäsä*
<-- wid denne, uti desse senare hårde Åhren, infallne, och vårt kiäre Fädernes-Land på många Orter märckeligen tryckiande hungers Nöden

5. The Finnish version of King Charles's biography represents one of the toughest examples of 17th century written Finnish. The Finnish audience, when listening to the recital of the text from the pulpits, must have found several passages totally unintelligible. The long sentences and the repetition of abstract derivatives combined with defective renderings must have sounded like a flow of gibberish for the listeners. Due to lack of appropriate Finnish terminology the translator had resorted to phonological modifications of Swedish words or to translation loans: *instruktioni* <- Sw. *instruktion*; *ambassadi* <- *ambassad*; *förmynderskapin virka* <- *förmynderskapsämbete*; *solenniteetti* <- *solennitet*; *drabantti* <- *drabant*; *feltslaktninki* <- *fältslag*; *sotaflotta* <- *krigsflotta*; *residenskaupunki* <- *residensstad*; *ulosvanha* <- *urgammal*; *langennut tila* <- *förfallet tillstånd*; *rohvaistettu seisovaisuus* <- *behjärtad ståndaktighet*; *harjoittelevainen persoona* <- *studerande person*.

Besides Swedish terminology there are other foreign elements in the text, often Swedish structures with Finnish words (e.g. *antaa löytää itsens raadisa* <- *infinna sig vid rådet*). Such phraseology is in most cases due to the faithful translation technique of the time.

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